

# Word Wall Guidelines

A word wall is a collection of high frequency words posted in the room in alphabetical order. The word wall provides students with a quick and easy reference for the correct spelling of words that are most frequently encountered in their writing.

## General guidelines for creating and utilizing a word wall:

- ☐ Only high frequency words should be posted on the word wall. Content/theme area words should be placed on charts or other bulletin boards.
- ☐ Make sure all students can see the words on the wall from where they are sitting. Teacher typed words using 140 pt. font is usually much larger and more easily visible than commercially available words.
- ☐ For some teachers, it is helpful to back words in different colors. This will help when referring to homophones such as there/their.
- ☐ Add no more than 5 words a week. These words should be selected from high frequency word lists or words frequently misspelled in student writing.
- ☐ Do not start the year with all of the words. This defeats the purpose of allowing children to gradually acquire new words.
- ☐ Copying words from word walls may be difficult for some students. For these students supply them with the words written on a piece of paper. Tape the word wall paper to their desk or writing folder for easy reference.
- ☐ Give students a portable word wall to use throughout the day. This will particularly help those students who have difficulty copying from the board.
- ☐ Interact with the word wall on a daily basis. See list of suggested activities on the next pages.
- ☐ Once the word is posted, hold students accountable for them in their daily writing efforts, not just during word study/spelling instruction.

## Other Types of Word Walls

- Phonic Patterns
- Spelling, Word Family, Rhyming Patterns
- Content/Topical/Thematic Word Walls
- Words We Know
- Prefixes, Suffixes and Root Words
- Words from Read Alouds
- Feeling Words
- Interesting Verbs
- Interesting Adjectives
- Words with Multiple Meanings
- Onomatopoeic words

## Word Walls Come in All Shapes and Sizes

- Portable Word Walls
- Cupboard Doors
- Poster Frame
- Pocket Chart
- Tall Cabinet
- Anchor Charts

# Word Wall Activities

## Clap, Chant, Write—Introduction of New Words

Teacher introduces 5 Word Wall words per week by having students:

- see the words
- say the words
- chant the words (snap, clap, stomp, cheer)
- write the words and check them together with the teacher
- trace around the words and check together with the teacher

Have the students number a sheet of paper 1-5.

Place one of the 5 new word cards in the pocket chart. Say the word,, use the word in a sentence, have students write the word on their paper. Continue with 4 additional words.

When all five words have been written, point to the words and have the students clap and chant the spelling of the words.

Students use a red pen, marker or crayon to trace around the word.

On the following days of the week, teacher practices the new Word Wall words and reviews previous words with practice activities.

## Rhyme with the Word Wall

The teacher says a sentence which contains a word that rhymes with one of the Word Wall words and is spelled with the same pattern. Children must decide which word rhymes and how to spell it.

Students number their paper just as they do for Clap, Chant, Write, 1-5

The teacher gives the following clues for the lessons words.

Number one begins with a *t* and rhymes with walk

Student writes talk on paper

Number two begins with an *m* and rhymes with by

Student writes my on paper

Number three begins with an *f* and rhymes with end

Student writes friend on paper

Number four begins with a *w* and rhymes with bear

Student writes wear on paper

Number five begins with a *f* and rhymes with car

Student writes far on paper

To check the answers, teacher says the rhyming word and lets students say the word they wrote and chant its spelling.

Cunningham, P.M. (1999). The Teacher's Guide to the Four Blocks. N.C.: Carson-Dellosa.

## Review Endings

This activity helps children learn to spell Word Wall words which need an ending.

Students number their papers 1-5.

Teacher calls a word that can have an ending added to it. Begin with just one ending for lesson. Then add additional endings in separate lessons. Then combine them so that children are listening for all the endings.

Jumping, The frog is jumping over the log, jumping

Student writes jumping on paper.

Ask what Word Wall word was used with an ending. Say the word and chant its spelling.

Continue in same manner with 4 additional words.

Looking, I am looking at a new book, looking.

Student writes looking on paper.

Called, She called her mom on the phone, called.

Student writes called on paper.

Taking, We are taking a trip to St. Louis, taking.

Student writes taking on paper

Tells, My teacher tells good stories, tells.

Student writes tells on paper.

Cunningham, P.M. (1999). The Teacher's Guide to the Four Blocks. N.C.:Carson-Dellosa.

### **Cross-Checking**

Call out several words that begin with the same letter for students to write on the front, such as these: went want was what where. Tell students that they will have to decide which word from the front makes sense in the sentence.

Say a sentence leaving out one of the words.

Students decide which word makes sense and write it on paper.

Say and spell the word.

Do 4 additional sentences.

Cunningham, P.M. (1999). The Teacher's Guide to the Four Blocks. N.C.: Carson-Dellosa.

### **Make Sentences**

1. Dictate a sentence using several of the word wall words:

Josh will come to my house to play.

2. Students listen as you repeat the whole sentence.

3. Then repeat the sentence one word at a time, giving students plenty of time to find the words on the Word Wall and write them.

Remind children to begin sentences with a capital letter. Have days when you dictate questions and exclamatory sentences. It's fun to use student's names in the sentences. Students also like to dictate sentences using lots of words from the word wall.

Cunningham, P.M. (1995). Phonics They Use. N.Y.: Harper Collins.

### **Be a Mind Reader**

Be a Mind Reader was a favorite of my class last year. In this game, the teacher thinks of a word on the wall and then gives five clues to that word.

Have students number their paper 1-5 and tell them that you are going to see who can read your mind and figure out which of the words on the board you are thinking of. Tell them you will give

them five clues. By the fifth clue, everyone should guess your word, but if they read your mind they might get it before the fifth clue.

For your first clue, always give the same clue:

It's one of the words on the Word Wall.

Students should write next to number one the word they think it might be.

The second clue is:

It has four letters.

Student writes word.

The third clue is:

It begins with a digraph ph.

Student writes word

The fourth clue is:

It has a short e vowel sound.

Student writes the word.

The fifth clue is:

It begins the sentence: \_\_\_\_ will lunch be ready?

Cunningham, P.M. (1999). *The Teacher's Guide to the Four Blocks*.

### **Ruler Tap**

Teacher chooses a word from the Word Wall.

Say the word, then tap and say several letters in that word but not the whole word: come, c-o

Call on a student to finish spelling the word out loud: m-e.

If the student correctly finishes spelling the word, that child gets to call out a word, tap and spell the word and call on another student to finish.

Do several additional words.

Variations of this activity could be, only the teacher having a ruler, all students having a ruler.

Cunningham, P.M. (1995). *Phonics They Use*. N.Y.: Harper Collins.

### **Bingo**

You will need photocopies sheets of 9 or 25 blocks.

Students will need objects to cover words.

Call on students to pick words from the wall they want included in the game.

As each word is picked, students will write it on their Bingo sheet in any blank block they choose and you will write it on an index card.

When all students have filled up their sheets you are ready to play.

Shuffle your index cards and call the words one at a time.

Have students chant the spelling of each word and then cover it with their object.

The first student to have a complete row covered wins Bingo.

Students can clear their sheets and play again.

Cunningham, P.M. (1995). *Phonics They Use*. N.Y.: Harper Collins.

### **Word Sorts**

Write 10-15 words on large index cards and place in a pocket chart.

Have students write these words on separate smaller cards or papers at their desks.

Have students sort the words into different piles depending on some features certain words share. Students may sort all words that begin with a certain sound, have a certain vowel sound, contain a certain blend or digraph.

Cunningham, P.M. (1995). *Phonics They Use*. N.Y.: Harper Collins.

### **Guess the Covered Word**

The purpose of this activity is to help children practice the important strategy of cross-checking meaning with letter-sound information.

The teacher writes 4 or 5 sentences on board, sentence strips, or overhead. Cover a word in each sentence with two sticky notes--one covering the onset, the other covering the rime.

Call on a student to read the first sentence.

Students make several guesses for the covered word. Teacher writes the guesses on the board.

The teacher takes off the first sticky note that is covering the onset.

Guesses that don't begin with that onset are erased and any new guesses can be added.

When all the guesses which fit both the meaning the whole word is revealed.

### **Word Work (using Letter Tiles)**

Teacher calls a Word Wall word, class chants and then writes word in first box on Word Work sheet.

Continue with 4 additional words.

Student uses letter cards/tiles to build the word in the next space on the Word Work sheet.

Student uses a marker to write the word in the last space.

Continue with the 4 remaining words.

Fountas, I.C. Pinnell, G.S.: (1998) *Word Matters*. N.H. Heinemann.

### **Build/Mix/Fix (using Letter Tiles)**

Teacher calls 5 words from the Word Wall one at a time. Students chant and write on paper as teacher writes on board.

Teacher directs class to Build the first word with letter tiles/cards at desk.

After all students have the word built, teacher directs class to Mix up the letters of the word.

Students are directed to Fix the word by arranging the letters to spell the word.

Chant the word.

Continue with remaining words.

Fountas, I.C. Pinnell, G.S.: (1998) *Word Matters*. N.H. Heinemann.

### **Look, Say, Cover, Write, Check**

Take a paper with three or four columns

Teacher calls out 5 Word Wall words.

Students write the list of words in the first column.

Begin with the first word. SAY it and notice parts to remember.

LOOK closely at the letters to notice the visual details.

COVER the word with a card and think about how the word looks.

WRITE the word from memory.

Uncover and CHECK it with the word in the first column.

Cover and write the word again and check.

Do all five words.

### **Flashlight Fun**

Turn out the lights.

Say the poem together with the class:

Flashlight, flashlight, oh so bright,

Shine on a word with your light.

Shine the flashlight on individual words for the class to read and chant.

Gruber, B. (1998). Instant Word Wall High Frequency Words. CA: Practice & Learn Right Publications

### **Let's Cheer**

1. Choose 5 words from the Word Wall.

2. Print each letter boldly on paper for each word.

3. Cheerleaders face the class holding the letter papers to spell the word.

4. Call out the first letter of the word.

5. The student holding that letter steps forward and raises the letter paper as the class says the letter.

6. Continue until the entire word has been spelled.

7. Say the word 3 times in unison.

8. Take turns being cheerleaders and spelling the rest of the words.

Gruber, B. (1998). Instant Word Wall High Frequency Words. CA: Practice & Learn Right Publications

### **Word Fun Center**

1. Teacher chooses 5 words from the Word Wall and writes them on the board.

2. Divide the students into 6 groups.

3. Each group is given a different center material to spell the words.

\*painted lima beans

\*letter tiles

\*pasta

\*letter/object tray

\*stencils

\*Wikki Sticks

\*play-doh

\*alphabet stamps

\*magnetic letters

Gruber, B. (1998). Instant Word Wall High Frequency Words

### **Wet Words**

1. Teacher chooses 5 word wall words.
2. Say word to class and have them chant.
3. Write on individual chalkboard one letter at a time with paintbrush and water.
4. Continue with additional words.

Gruber, B. (1998). Instant Word Wall High Frequency Words. CA:Practice & Learn Right Publications

### **Word Jar**

1. When 5 new Word Wall words are introduced, write them on a slip of paper and add to Word Jar.
2. Choose 5 students to pick a word from the jar.
3. One student at a time reads their word, class chants the spelling.
4. Do additional words.

### **Chapter Book Tie-In: Donovan's Word Jar by Monalisa Degross**

Gruber, B. (1998). Instant Word Wall High Frequency Words. CA:Practice & Learn Right Publications

### **Rainbow Words**

1. Pass out paper to each student.
2. Teacher chooses 5 Word Wall words.
3. As teacher says word, students chant and write on paper with a crayon.
4. Do the same for the additional words.
5. After all the words have been written once with a crayon, students go back and write each word again with 2 different colors of crayons.

Gruber, B. (1998). Instant Word Wall High Frequency Words. CA:Practice & Learn Right Publications

### **I Spy...Give clues such as:**

It is on the wall.

It has 3 letters in it.

It rhymes with hat.

It is an animal.

etc. The kids write the word when they figure it out.

### **Ready, Set, Spell...**

Say a word from the wall.

Together say, ready, set, spell.

Spell the word together.

Information was borrowed and adapted from Reading Rockets  
[www.readingrockets.org](http://www.readingrockets.org) and Learning Unlimited  
[www.learningunlimitedllc.com](http://www.learningunlimitedllc.com)